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Nirav's bro in million-dollar fraud

Nehal Modi, the younger brother of Nirav Modi, was on Saturday indicted in New York for fraudulently obtaining diamonds worth over $1.4 million

Nehal told New York-based LLD Diamonds USA that he was pursuing a business relationship with Seattle-based Costco Wholesale Corporation P9

He sought and obtained diamonds worth **$2.6 million** from LLD, saying he wanted to show them to Costco for a potential sale

Nehal then pawned most of the diamonds to secure loans for personal use. The rest were sold to various retailers without LLD's authorisation

Though he paid back **$1.2 million** to LLD, a majority of the proceeds were spent for personal purposes

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AIR INDIA
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

Centre sends talks invite, lets agitators decide date

Unions to approach NDA partners to pressure BJP to repeal new farm laws; chalk out fresh plans for public participation in protests

HARPREET BAJWA @Chandigarh

HOURS after Union Home Minister Amit Shah indicated on Sunday that his colleague and Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar will meet representatives of protesting farmer unions in a day or two, the Centre sent a written invite for the next round of talks while asking them to choose a convenient date.

In his letter, Agriculture Ministry joint secretary Vivek Aggarwal said, "I request those previously invited protesting union leaders to provide details of their remaining concerns and doubts and suggest a date as per convenience for next round of talks."

Earlier in the day, farmer unions decided to approach allies of the ruling NDA asking them to pressure the BJP to repeal the three contentious farm laws to end the deadlock.

Addressing the media in Bolpur town of West Bengal, Amit Shah said: "I am not exactly aware of the timing, but Tomar is likely to meet the representatives of farmers tomorrow or the day after to discuss their demands."

Also, in a gesture loaded with symbolism, PM Narendra Modi made an unscheduled visit to the historic Gurdwara Rakabganj in Delhi to pay tribute to Guru Tegh Bahadur, a day after his death anniversary.

Articulating the position of farmers after a meeting of all unions at Delhi's border, Darshan Pal, president of the Krantikari Kisan Union, said, "We will approach NDA allies on December 26 and urge them to put pressure on the BJP to repeal the farm laws."

The farmer unions also decided to observe Kisan Diwas on December 23 as a day of fast, co-opting the public by urging them not to cook lunch that day so as to skip a meal in solidarity. And on December 27, when Modi's *Mann Ki Baat* programme will be on, they intend to copy his Covid time strategy of urging people to beat thalis at home till his speech is over, this time to show anti-BJP unity. Also, Haryana will be forced to be toll-free from December 25 to 27, Pal said. Besides, farmers will begin a relay hunger strike from Monday. P7

FOREIGN DONATION GLARE ON PUNJAB UNION

BKU (Ekta-Ugrahan) leader Sukhdev Singh said, "We received an email from a Central agency through our bank seeking our registration details that allow us to receive donations from abroad." He said it is part of the Centre's pressure tactics to defeat the agitation

Parliament dissolved, Nepal sets poll dates

OLI HAD NO CHOICE

Oli has gradually lost his majority in Parliament, and in the party. So he did not have many options, said Dr Nihar R Nayak, a fellow at MP-IDSA

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

PUSHED to the wall by rebellion within his party, Nepal Prime Minister K P Oli Sharma on Sunday recommended the dissolution of Parliament and snap polls. Soon, President Bidya Devi Bhandari complied and announced that the first phase of general elections will be held on April 30, followed by the second phase on May 10.

According to sources, the immediate reason for the dissolution was an ordinance introduced by Oli this month on the Constitutional Council, which his rival within the party, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' said will weaken the country's checks and balances. The council, headed by the prime minister, has the leader of opposition as one of the members. It recommends appointments to various constitutional bodies.

Among Oli's strengths was solid support from the Chinese envoy. He seems to have lost it now, said sources in the Himalayan country.

"There are multiple reasons behind Oli recommending the dissolution of Parliament, but the main problem was his autocratic style as he took all decisions on his own," said a Kathmandu-based journalist.

EXPRESS READ

Ministry calls meeting on new virus strain

New Delhi: The Union Health Ministry has called an urgent meeting of its Joint Monitoring Group on Monday to discuss the emergence of a mutated variant of the coronavirus in the United Kingdom. P7

North India reels under cold wave

New Delhi: Cold wave conditions persisted across North India on Sunday, with the national capital recording the season's lowest temperature of 3.4 degrees Celsius so far.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a roadshow at Bolpur in Birbhum district, West Bengal, on Sunday | PTI

New CM to be from Bengal: Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata

SEEKING to take the sting out of the 'outsider' barb frequently directed at the BJP by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday asserted that the new chief minister after polls will certainly be someone from the state's soil.

"The change in people's mind is clearly visible. Mamata Banerjee's misrule will end in the upcoming elections and Bengal will get a new chief minister who is from West Bengal, not an outsider," said Shah. "When you (Mamata) were in Congress and Indira and Rajiv Gandhi visited Bengal, did you call them outsiders?" he quipped.

Without specifying any deadline for implementing the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), Shah flagged the infiltration issue and said people will usher in change in the Assembly elections to stop it. "The people of Bengal are unhappy with the infiltrators. They will bring in change to stop infiltration from the neighbouring country," Shah said at the end of a huge roadshow in Bolpur town of Birbhum.

The TMC can never stop infiltration as it believes in appeasement politics. Only BJP can stop it

Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

He said after the Covid-19 pandemic subsides and the vaccination process is over, the Centre will begin discussions to implement the CAA.

Impressed by the large turnout, Shah said it was a reflection of the people's love for PM Narendra Modi, adding he had never seen such a massive roadshow.

"2021 will usher in change for the development of Bengal. All BJP-ruled states have already started their journey on the path of development. You gave Congress three decades; communists over three decades; and Trinamool 10 years. Give the BJP a chance and within five years, we will make it Sonar Bangla," he said. P7

BSY, HDK spike merger talk, but support possible

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE new-found bonhomie between top leaders had fuelled speculation over the JDS inching closer to the BJP, and even a possible merger. On Sunday, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and JDS leader H D Kumaraswamy rubbished all such talk, but gave enough indications on having issue-based understanding between the two parties.

"There is no truth in speculation over any JDS MLAs joining BJP or its merger with our party," the CM said in a statement issued on Sunday. The JDS has only extended its support to the BJP in moving a no-confidence motion against the Legislative Council chairman but had opposed the Anti-Cow Slaughter Bill, the CM pointed out and added that Kumaraswamy had made it clear that they will not support Anti-Cow Slaughter Bill. He reiterated that it will be implemented by promulgating an ordinance. "Assembly elections are two-and-half years away and such conjecture is far from truth," the CM added.

Minutes after the CM's office issued the statement, former C M Kumaraswamy took to social media to make his stand clear. "The Janata Dal (S), which is a party of Kannadigas with self-esteem, will never think of political merger. The party, which is a strong voice of the people, will never display such stupidity," he stated and added that at the most, they may extend issue-based support to the BJP, if need be. Terming a merger with BJP as suicidal for the regional party, the former CM said, "I don't foresee such a situation in future too." P4

There is no truth in speculation over any JDS MLAs joining BJP or its merger with our party

B S Yeddiyurappa, Chief Minister

GRAM PANCHAYAT POLLS

Candidate's promise: Win = development, Lose = expose graft

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Tumakuru

THIS gram panchayat candidate will not go down without a fight. Even if she loses! And with an unusual manifesto which is grabbing eyeballs, she's all the rage on social media too. Her manifesto even managed to catch the attention of Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar.

Phase 1 tomorrow

The first phase of the GP polls will be held on Tuesday. Voters are mostly looking forward with hope of having better roads, houses and local employment opportunities. P4

Meet **Gangamma H**, a Dalit, who is contesting from not one, but two gram panchayat seats — Kalkere and Doddaguni in Hebburu Gram Panchayat, just to be safe. While she's pitted against two men in Kalkere, she will be taking on five men in Doddaguni, which are General category seats.

And what are her poll promises? If she wins, she has listed development works like getting the title deed done in a temple's name, building a platform at a peepal tree (aralikatte), constructing a road as per the map, and a good drain to ensure free flow of rainwater.

Well, what happens if she loses? She warns that she will get the BPL ration cards of 25 'undeserving' families cancelled, get the pensions of 40 families under different schemes cancelled 'for giving false information', develop a graveyard as per the old records and evict 11 families 'who have encroached upon government land'. In a footnote, she has buttressed her claims, saying that she had got the bills for six houses under housing schemes stopped over alleged illegal allotments. CONTINUED ON: P4

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